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ABSTRACT

The reform bandwagon has brought about a glut of legislation under the term "education reform." Efforts to define this term have been unsatisfactory. A study by Flanigan et al. attempted to define the term education reform, but it discovered that each state had developed its own definition and program. This finding was a result of a survey sent to all 50 chief state school officers requesting information concerning educational reform in their state. Of 11 questions in the survey, 2 receive attention in this paper: (1) Did the reform package passed by your state affect the role, function, or authority of the school administrator at the state or school district level? and (2) Has the passage of the reform package affected the role, function, or authority of the school principal? Tables for each question list the responses for each state, with a description for selected states included. The findings include an analysis of the responses and trends. It was found that the educational reform movement has been a prevalent part of the changing role of school administrators and principals. Also, there are a variety of approaches to reform, thereby enhancing the role and function of the school administrator and principal. (19 references) (RR)

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An paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the **Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration** in Auburn, AL, November 11-12, 1991.

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THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM BANDWAGON: IS IT REALLY A RUNAWAY TRAIN?

ABSTRACT

The recent hysteria to get on the reform bandwagon by state politicians, including governors and legislators, has brought about a glut of legislation under the rubric of educational reform. The reported intent of the legislation and the implementation intent could be called mixed, at best. The areas most often targeted for reform are the educational delivery and accountability systems, most often at the district or school levels. The purpose of this research was to determine a common thread in the educational reform terminology used from state to state and to determine what information was available to policy-making bodies in the various states.

A survey was sent to all fifty Chief State School Officers requesting information concerning educational reform in their state. All fifty responded to

the survey. This particular presentation will focus on the policy issues of whether educational reform has impacted the administrator's and principal's roles. Due to the magnitude of the response, this information would be of benefit to educational policy makers, administrators and trainers of educational administrators.

INTRODUCTION

The recent hysteria to get on the reform bandwagon by state politicians, be it governors, or legislators has brought about a glut of legislation under the term education reform. The intent of the reform legislation could be called mixed at its best. The area most often targeted is the improvement of the education delivery system, either on the level of the teacher or the school administrator. Many practitioners, academicians of education administration, and the public at large have raised the question what is education reform. Is there a common thread in the terminology used from state to state? Such information should be available to states by policy-making bodies as well as the education community and the public.

Research has shown that much of the state reform packages directly affect the level school district and those in charge of administering education programs. Since this is the area receiving an inordinate amount of attention, it may be prudent to consider the direct effects of the reform movement on the definition,

role, function, and responsibility performance of the school administrator in each state where education reform has been addressed.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

Efforts to define the term educational reform have been unsatisfactory. What is viewed as educational reform in one state may be considered a trend or common practice in other state. In order to avoid confusion or controversy, educational reform in this paper will mean reform which has been identified by the chief state school officer as a change relating to the role or function of the school administrator or the principal.

In 1989 a survey of all Chief State School Officers was conducted by Flanigan, Richardson, Cline, and Schrader while at Western Kentucky University. As professors of education, they attempted to define the term **education reform**, but as they reviewed the available literature and the results of their own study, they discovered each state had developed its own definition and program. Attempting to find some common denominator among the various state education reform programs, they realized the immensity of dealing with the entire reform movement was beyond their research team's ability. Because they helped train a large number of school administrators, they determined it was their primary responsibility to limit their research to the areas of school administration and to

restrict the gathering of data to the effects of the reform movement on the definition, role, function and responsibility of the school administrator in each state where education reform has been addressed.

A Nation at Risk alerted both the educational world as well as the general public to the necessity of striving for excellence in education. The publication emphasized that school reform and school effectiveness should be top priorities of education in American public secondary and elementary schools (Goldberg & Harvey, 1983).

Many researchers observed effective schools and tried to pinpoint characteristics which made these schools successful. The major characteristic which constantly surfaced in these studies was existing leadership from the principal who practiced instructional leadership (Ginsberg, 1988). A wave of reports after the publication of A Nation at Risk supported this finding: the principal was indeed the heart of school effectiveness. Principals were now seen as important change agents. In this role, they must work together with teachers to set a constructive tone and to increase professionalism and respect. Because of his/her position in the school the principal still remained the key (Levine, 1989). The most visible point of the school, the principal, was undergoing the closest scrutiny. Rightly or wrongly, the spotlight was on the principal to begin to turn education around.

The continuing education reform movement placed much emphasis on the instructional leadership role of the school administrator, which is a new role for many practicing administrators. The need for highly competent individuals to fill positions of school leadership will be particularly great in the coming years as greater demands than ever will be placed on the school principal (Wentz, 1989).

The intent of the researchers was to examine the changing role and function of the practicing school administrator as revealed in the findings of the survey as well as on other pertinent data. Primarily we will be dealing with the effects of the reform legislation which may have affected the role or function of today's practicing administrator.

THE SURVEY

Research findings indicate that groups such as the U.S. Department of Education and the Southern Education Board recommend improving schools by enhancing the instructional leadership capacity of principals (Ginsberg, 1988). Robert Slater (1988) reveals scholars and practitioners of education, and state departments of education, aware of the growing importance of school administration to the reform of education, have been busy re-directing the role of the school administrator.

Among the concepts that have emerged, perhaps the most widely used is the concept of the principal as the instructional leader. It was this newly recognized function of the school administrator and particularly the principal, which first interested Flanigan, et al, (1989). In their unpublished survey the researchers questioned the impact of the state education reform legislation of the role and authority of the school administrator as well as that of the school principal. In order to determine the effect of such legislation, they sent to each chief state school officer in all 50 states and the District of Columbia a questionnaire comprised of 11 questions designed to provide information about those in the state who initiated reform packages, efforts to spend the money allocated, and the effects of the major pieces of legislation on the financial resources available to the various local school districts. The major intent of the survey, to which all chief state school officers responded, was to determine to what extent, if any, the role and function of the public school administrator or school principal had been changed as a result of reform legislation passed by the state legislation or general assembly. For clarification purposes, in this paper the term school administrator is defined as the state superintendent, district superintendent as well as assistant superintendents who work with school principals. The term school principal is defined as the individual in charge of an attendance unit as well as the assistant(s).

THE FINDINGS

Of the eleven questions in the survey; two will receive attention in this paper.

1. Did the reform package passed by your state affect the role, function, or authority of the school administrator at the state or district level? Yes or No
2. Has the passage of the reform package affected the role, function, or authority of the school principal? Yes or No

In addition to these questions, the chief state school officers were asked to comment and to be specific about changes which the legislation had on the role of function of the school administrator or principal.

Included in this report are the states which reported no changes in the role or function of the school administrator or principal as well as those which reported changes. Further we will attempt to present areas of the findings which were highly congruent as well as reporting extreme and trends as found in the results.

FINDINGS OF QUESTION #1

Did the reform package passed by your state affect the role, function, or authority of the school administrator at the state or district level? yes __ no __ Comments. Please be specific.

Insert Table I about here.

RESPONSES TO QUESTION #1

Six areas of commonalty emerged from the data gained from question one.

1. Leadership academy
2. Change in certification
3. School superintendent as instructional leader
4. Teacher and superintendent work together
5. Procedures for measuring performance
6. Testing for certification

In order to clarify each area, the researchers selected a state which best illustrated the implementation of the specified goal. Thirty-four chief state school officers acknowledged the reform package passed by the state did indeed affect the role, function, or authority of the school administrator. The state officials identified in their responses to the survey the leadership academy as the most common area addressed by legislation.

Although each state which created a leadership academy did so in a little different manner, some states were very specific about the expectations, such as that developed in Mississippi; others placed the responsibility and procedures in the hands of the State Board of Education. Some states funded these programs well; others left it to the State Board of Education to find the resources to carry out the academy's mission.

The state of Mississippi, which calls its academy "The School Executive Management Institute," made the academy a part of state statute. The law reads:

> It shall be the purpose and duty of the institute to conduct through empirical studies and analyses of the school management needs of the local school district throughout the state, to make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding standards and programs of training that aid in the development of administration and management skills of local school administrators, and to conduct such programs related to

these purposes as they are implemented under guidelines established by the State Board of Education (The School Management Executive Institute, 1982).

Another major area that legislatures addressed in their reform was administrator preparation and certification, and in some cases program upgrades. Michigan developed certification for school administrators under a new program which required administrators to possess certain minimum qualifications, in particular forty-five months as a teacher in a school after July 1, 1988. A person whose primary responsibility is administering instruction programs shall possess a valid Michigan school administration certificate. If the person is employed and not certified, he or she may enroll in a program leading to certification as a school administrator and has 6 years from the date of enrollment to met certification requirements (State of Michigan, 1987).

In Idaho the school administrator is granted initial certification when evidence is present to support five years of successful classroom teaching experience as well as the completion of a formal program of study in school administration which meets state standards. The commission further recommends that school administrators complete a series of six hours of graduate work every five years, selected from six specific areas, relating to instruction and management (State of Idaho, 1987).

Several states attempted to address the issue of the school administrator as the instructional leader. In August of 1985 the State Board of Education of Texas adopted rules which required public school administrators to complete a basic 36 hour instructional leadership training program and to participate in a 12- hour continuing inservice training program each year. These rules established the content of instructional leadership programs each year and identified potential sponsors (State of Texas, 1985).

One of the most unique approaches to education reform was to structure a professional development activity which involved both teachers and school administrators. Pennsylvania's major approach to education reform was to encourage a cooperative effort between teachers, and administrators within the school district. It was determined:

> All professional employees of the [school entities] receiving their initial Pennsylvania teaching or administrative certification shall be required at least once during every five-year period, to participate in professional development activity pursuant to the professional development plan of that professional employee's [school entity] (State of Pennsylvania, 1986).

Although the evaluation of employees is an expected means of measuring performance, some states have placed the procedures and methods within their state codes. Oklahoma is a clear example: state law requires every teacher to be

evaluated once every year. The other provisions in the law require that all personnel designated by the local board of education to conduct the personnel evaluation shall be required to participate in training conducted by the state department of education prior to conducting such evaluations (State of Oklahoma, 1985).

A final area of significance which emerged from the responses to question one was testing for certification. Becoming a certified teacher in Ohio public elementary and secondary schools requires a test of basic skills and academic aptitude. Future school administrators will also be required to pass an examination administered by the state board of education. Thus, Ohio joins a long list of states which now requires a successful score on an examination for administrative certification (State of Ohio, 1988).

FINDINGS OF QUESTION 2

Has the passage of the reform package affected the role, function or authority of the school principal? yes __ no __ Comments. Please be specific.

Insert Table II about here.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 2

Thirty-five chief state school officers responded that their states had passed some type of legislation, or policies which affected the role, function or authority of the school principal. No two states approached the reform of the principalship in the same manner: there exists a vast contrast of approaches to the reform of the principalship.

A review of the responses provided by the chief state school officers could be divided into five distinct areas. The most common approach used by states to improve the skills of principals was the principal academy. The second was the process and training required by principals for observing and evaluating teachers. The third was the area of preparation for the position which required testing of candidates as well as changes in the preparation process for certification. Next was the multi-phase approach where several areas were combined (i.e. required supervision, professional growth activities for the staff, development of better management techniques, and more participation in the teaching-learning process).

Finally, there exists the isolated single area where by a state may make a major change in the role, function or authority of the principal, without interrelating to other state reform programs (Flanigan, et al, 1989).

In an attempt to clarify some of the reform programs relating to the principal, this report contains examples of programs which fall into each of the five indentified areas. The most common area addressed by the legislature was the establishment of principal academies to help the principal become the instructional leader. The legislature in Illinois passed an act in relation to education reform which determined "the principal shall assure administrative responsibility and instructional leadership" (State of Illinois, 1985). In addition, the state board was required to establish an administrators academy which provides for development of skills in the area of instructional staff development.

The Georgia General Assembly, unlike that in Illinois, placed the responsibility for developing their leadership academy upon the governor and the general assembly. Considered a part of Continuing Professional Development, the Educational Leadership Academy in Georgia must provide continuing development programs for public school leadership personnel to update and expand their leadership skills (State of Georgia, 1985).

The second area of major emphasis, that of training for observation and evaluation, may be best viewed in the approach used in Colorado. The state called for more systematic evaluation of teachers and administrators to increase

accountability and improve the quality of instruction. To ensure that local school districts were able to implement the evaluation system effectively, the 2 + 2 Project provided training activities to improve the skills of administrators and teachers. These activities helped evaluators conduct more precise, focused evaluations. Not content to use their own expertise in the area of evaluation; the state employed nationally recognized experts and reviewed outstanding evaluation programs. From this effort state of the art evaluation techniques have been incorporated into the system (State of Colorado, 1987).

In the area of testing prospective principals as well as making changes in the preparation process for certification, Kentucky has made great strides. The reform program in Kentucky emphasized the importance of the principal as the instructional leader, and furthermore, required principal testing and internship. The examinations are part of a total program, developed as part of their reform program. Kentucky requires their school administrators to hold a masters degree in an academic discipline. After the completion of the master degree, a teacher with experience may apply for admission to a university to work on a program leading to a Rank One certification which leads to principal certification. The candidate must also complete a series of national examinations to remain in the program. Near the end of the Rank One program, each candidate for administrative certification must also pass the Kentucky Administrator Certification Examination, one of the most highly elevated programs of any state.

A year-long internship is required of each first year principal. Trained university monitors work with the new principal during the first year in the position (Kentucky State Board of Education, 1985).

The fourth area of commonalities in state education reform, the multi-phase approach, may be best illustrated by the program in Alabama. In the Quality of Education Act of 1988, the legislature set forth a multi-approach to the state school principal's improvement program. The program further includes the involvement of the state board of education. Some of the programs addressed are: a pilot program for inservice development for principals in each school system; expanded pilot management improvement programs for principals: a program for recruitment of school principals; reaffirmation of a commitment to the development of an effective leadership program to improve performance of school administrators; funding to establish statewide administrator's centers; and requirements for the state board to set up standards for the preparation of teacher supervisors and administrative employee (State of Alabama, 1988).

The fifth approach is probably best exemplified by the action in New Jersey. The revised program requires neither consistent preparation nor consistent qualification. Those individuals wishing to become principals would need to hold a master's degree in any field of business management and take three required education courses. Under a plan introduced in October 1986, each school principal would be required to hold master's degree in the field of

management science. Future candidates would be required to pass a state examination, and undergo a management skills evaluation at a state assessment center. The existing requirement that three years of teaching experience, prior to the issuance of a principal certificate, has been eliminated. Instead, prospective principals have to complete a pre-residency and residency, exposing them to various aspects of school management (New Jersey State Department of Education, 1988).

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that the education reform movement that has been a prevalent part of the changing role of school administrators and principals, and will likely continue to be a fact of life. A clear definition of education reform as viewed by the state legislatures or general assemblies however, remains an elusive element. Until the term can be more clearly defined, the actions and reactions of legislative bodies, education communities, and the general public will continue to affect the school administrators and principals in somewhat uncertain ways. Lacking a clearly defined role across all states, the educational leaders become pawns in the hands of sometimes well-meaning, but often capricious and arbitrary legislatures and state boards of education.

What has emerged, however, is a variety of approaches to reform, thereby enhancing the role and function of the school administrators and principals. On

the basis of this survey the training of school administrators and principals will have to be viewed on a state-to-state basis as residences, internships, and practicums become standard practices.

There is no question that state control of public elementary and secondary education will be in the political forefront as we enter the 1990's. It would appear that policy makers on the state level need to develop a set of goals and a mission before drastically altering the role, function, or authority of the school administrator and principal. From this brief paper one can find as many directions as there are states with reform movements. Is reform a bandwagon or a run-a-way train? Take your choice.

Table I

Response of Chief State School Officers to the impact of reform on school administrators.

STATE	YES	NO	STATE	YES	NO
Alabama	x		Nebraska	x	
Alaska		x	Nevada	x	
Arizona	x		New Hampshire		x
Arkansas	x		New Jersey	x	
California	x		New Mexico		x
Colorado	x		New York	x	
Connecticut		x	North Carolina	x	
Delaware	x		North Dakota		x
Florida	x		Ohio		x
Georgia	x		Oklahoma	x	
Hawaii	x		Oregon		x
Idaho	x		Pennsylvania	x	
Illinois	x		Rhode Island		x
Indiana	x		South Carolina	x	
Iowa	x		South Dakota	x	
Kansas		x	Tennessee		x
Kentucky	x		Texas	x	
Louisiana	x		Utah	x	
Maine	x		Vermont		x
Maryland		x	Virginia	x	
Massachusetts	x		Washington	x	
Michigan		x	West Virginia	x	
Minnesota	x		Wisconsin		x
Mississippi	x		Wyoming		x
Missouri	x		District of Columbia		x
Montana		x			
TOTALS				**34**	**17**

Table II

Responses of Chief State School Officers to affects of reform on school principals.

STATE	YES	NO	STATE	YES	NO
Alabama	x		Nebraska	x	
Alaska		x	Nevada	x	
Arizona	x		New Hampshire		x
Arkansas	x		New Jersey	x	
California	x		New Mexico		x
Colorado	x		New York	x	
Connecticut		x	North Carolina	x	
Delaware	x		North Dakota		x
Florida	x		Ohio		x
Georgia	x		Oklahoma	x	
Hawaii	x		Oregon		x
Idaho	x		Pennsylvania	x	
Illinois	x		Rhode Island		x
Indiana	x		South Carolina	x	
Iowa	x		South Dakota	x	
Kansas	x	x	Tennessee		x
Kentucky	x		Texas	x	
Louisiana	x		Utah	x	
Maine	x		Vermont		x
Maryland		x	Virginia	x	
Massachusetts	x		Washington	x	
Michigan		x	West Virginia	x	
Minnesota	x		Wisconsin		x
Mississippi	x		Wyoming		x
Missouri	x		District of Columbia		x
Montana		x			
TOTALS				**35**	**16**

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